

stones caught my eye, and there, within a few yards, were three Courfers, the colour of which so exactly matched the surrounding objects that they had even escaped the sharp eyes of my boy, till one of them stretched out its wing over its extended leg. I promptly secured all three of these victims of misplaced confidence, and returned to camp well pleased with myself. These were the first and the last that I met with during the whole trip.

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### VII.—*Further Notes on Tunisian Birds.*

By JOSEPH I. S. WHITAKER, F.Z.S.

ALTHOUGH prevented from visiting the Regency myself this year, I am nevertheless able to give another short list of some additions to my collection of Tunisian birds, the greater number of which were obtained by Mr. O. V. Aplin during a collecting tour lately made by him in Tunis on my account.

The list also includes a few species of which specimens have been received from the Tunisian naturalist, M. Blanc, and four others, examples of which were obtained by myself last year, but were inadvertently omitted in my last list (*Ibis*, 1895, p. 85).

With regard to Mr. Aplin's journey I need merely say that he started on his travels in January last, going first south from Gabes, towards the Tripoli frontier, and then working round, and gradually travelling north, till he finally reached Ghardimaou in the Tell country, where his collecting trip ended about the middle of June. As may be seen from the accompanying map (p. 88), Mr. Aplin got over a good deal of ground, and visited districts not previously worked by myself, or by any of my collectors; but unfortunately, the season was exceptionally dry, and bird-life in the far south seems to have been more wanting than usual this year, thus accounting for a somewhat disappointing result, so far as that part of Tunis is concerned. At the same time, however, although meeting with but few birds new to my collection, Mr. Aplin came across and secured specimens of several interesting southern species already recorded by me, the



Walker &amp; Boutall sc.

MAP OF TUNIS, SHOWING MR. APLIN'S ROUTE.

Chats and Larks naturally being foremost in the number. Of the *Saxicolinae* he met with all those previously obtained by myself, including *Saxicola lugens*, and the two forms of Black-throated Chat, *S. stapazina* and *S. melanoleuca*. In the way of Larks, besides *Rhamphocorys clot-bey* and *Alauda arborea*, new to my collection, he met with all those alluded to in my former papers in this Journal, with the exception of *A. cinctura*. Of *Chersophilus margaritae* he got five specimens, all very rufous in colour, and more so even than the specimen obtained by myself last year. Of the Crested Larks he found the four species or races treated of in my papers, but, like myself, failed to meet with the typical *Alauda (Galerita) cristata*. Mr. Aplin's specimens and observations, I may here say, confirm entirely what I have already written on the subject of the Crested Larks found in Tunis.

I take this opportunity of observing that Dr. Koenig, in his interesting work on the Ornis of Algeria (J.f.O. 1895, p. 413), alluding to the pale Crested Lark described by me in my previous paper in 'The Ibis' under the name of *Alauda cristata pallida* (Ibis, 1895, p. 100), must surely be in error when he refers it to *Galerita arenicola* (Tristr.). Putting aside the question of the specific distinctness of *G. arenicola*, of which Canon Tristram himself was in doubt (Ibis, 1861, p. 414), and which I believe is not now generally admitted, Canon Tristram, when speaking of this Lark (Ibis, 1859, p. 426) very clearly states that its bill "is extremely elongated, slender, and curved, its length being .9 inch from the gape." Again further on, comparing the bill of *G. arenicola* with that of *G. macrorhyncha*, he says "in both species the extremity of the bill is rounded and dilated, instead of running to a point, as in other *Galeridae*." Now *A. cristata pallida*, as Dr. Koenig himself states, is a short-billed form, its culmen, in most of my specimens, measuring half an inch, or just over that, and moreover being distinctly pointed, and not blunted at the tip. Should this pale form of Crested Lark be considered sufficiently distinct to be separated from the others, its name, I think, must therefore stand as **ALAUDA CRISTATA PALLIDA**, with the following description:—

Like *Alauda cristata thecklae*, but much paler, and of a light sand-colour.

Ad. ♂. Total length 6 in., wing 3·9, tail 2·2, culmen ·55, tarsi ·8.

Ad. ♀. Total length 5·5 in., wing 3·6, tail 2, culmen ·5, tarsi ·8.

*Hab.* Tunisian Sahara.

In my rather large series of Crested Larks from South Tunis, I have several specimens which correspond in some measure with Canon Tristram's description of *G. arenicola*, but I have placed these under *A. macrorhyncha*. The large-billed Larks certainly differ among themselves to a considerable extent, apart from any difference there may be between the sexes of each individual race, and I have in my collection three fairly distinguishable varieties, coming from different districts, viz. :—No. 1, a very large and very pale bird; no. 2, a smaller and darker bird; and finally no. 3, also a smaller, but a pale bird. I had not, however, intended speaking of these local forms of large-billed Larks, for the present at any rate, or until I had made further and fuller investigation into the matter, but Dr. Koenig, I see, has foreshadowed me in his above-mentioned work on the ornithology of Algeria, although he seems to have noticed but two varieties. While, without doubt, these can merely be looked upon as local, sedentary forms, modified according to the climate and natural characteristics of the district in which each particular form may occur, it is nevertheless highly interesting to notice to what an extent such modification can be, and is, carried by natural causes; and in no family of birds, perhaps, is this better exemplified than in that of the Larks.

Apologizing for this digression, and returning to Mr. Aplin's journey, I may say that in the north of the Regency he met with much better luck than in the south, obtaining specimens of several species new to my collection, among others *Garrulus cervicalis*, *Picus numidicus*, *Gecinus vaillanti*, *Parus ledouci*, and *Pycnonotus barbatus*, all procured in the neighbourhood of Ghardimaou, where the country is thickly wooded and well watered.

In conclusion, I may observe that besides the species which appear in the subjoined list, of which specimens were actually obtained, Mr. Aplin met with a few others, not included in my previous lists, as to the identity of which he had little or no doubt whatever, but I have preferred not to introduce these.

Except when otherwise stated, the observations on the different species in the following list are taken from Mr. Aplin's field-notes, with which he furnished me on his return home.

**1. SAXICOLA ISABELLINA.** (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. v. p. 399.)

M. Blanc has sent me specimens of this Chat from Tatahouine, in the south of the Regency. I never came across it myself, nor did Mr. Aplin meet with it during his late journey, so I think it must be looked upon as rather a rare bird in Tunisia, which is perhaps the extreme western limit of its range.

**2. SYLVIA HORTENSIS.**

I got a specimen of the Garden Warbler last year, but overlooked it when making out my list. The species is not uncommon in Tunis in spring. Mr. Aplin also found it near Ghardimaou.

**3. SYLVIA SARDA.** (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. v. p. 33.)

I have specimens of this Warbler both from Mr. Aplin and M. Blanc. Fairly common in the south in winter, it frequents the low bushes bordering the dry river-beds, and is found also on the lower hillsides. It utters a harsh alarm-note, somewhat like that of *S. melanocephala*.

**4. SYLVIA DESERTICOLA,** Tristr. (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. v. p. 32.)

This is another of the birds which should have been included in my last list. On re-examining my specimens of Warblers I found two regarding the identity of which I had some doubt, and a suspicion then formed in my mind that they belonged to the present species was subsequently confirmed on seeing Mr. Dresser's plate and description of *Melizophilus deserticola* in Part II. of his supplement to the 'Birds of Europe.' I obtained my specimens towards the end of March in the Aleppo-pine woods between Tebessa and Feriana,

and I believe I met with the species again on the Djebel Sel-loum, also a pine-clad mountain, near Kasrin, but I never found it anywhere further south, nor do any of my collectors appear to have met with it in the Tunisian Sahara, either in winter or in spring. Canon Tristram discovered this bird in the South Algerian Sahara between Nov. 29 and Dec. 23 (*Ibis*, 1859, p. 58), when it was presumably in winter quarters, and this seems to be the only record, thus far, of its occurrence at any great distance from the Aures and Nemencha Mountains, which may perhaps be looked upon as the summer quarters of the species. Whether it occurs throughout the entire range of the Saharan chain of mountains remains to be seen. Dr. Koenig, although constantly on the look-out for it, failed to meet with it in the South Algerian Sahara in spring, but found it, breeding, further north near Batna (*J. f. O.* 1895, p. 290), in which district Mr. C. Dixon had previously rediscovered the species in the spring of 1882 (*Ibis*, 1882, p. 565). Apparently there is a considerable difference between the summer and winter plumages. My specimens, having been obtained towards the end of March, are naturally in breeding-plumage, or almost so. It would be interesting to know something more of this bird's movements during winter. With reference to its breeding and summer life we are indebted to Dr. Koenig for some very detailed and interesting notes.

#### 5. *HYPOLAIIS POLYGLOTTA.* (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. v. p. 79.)

I have specimens of this species both from Mr. Aplin and M. Blanc. Fairly common in the north, among the wild-olive woods and on the bushed hillsides, but never very high up. Its song is very rich and varied, with some remarkably clear notes.

#### 6. *HYPOLAIIS ICTERINA.*

Also common in the north, but found generally at a lower level than the preceding species. Very plentiful among the thorny shrubs, and oleander clumps bordering the river Medjerdah near Ghardimaou. Its song, although rather pretty, is inferior to that of *H. polyglotta*, and partakes more

of the character of that of the true *Acrocephali*, although not so much as the song of *H. pallida*. This last-named species is, however, altogether more Acrocephaline generally in its ways and habits.

**7. ACROCEPHALUS PHRAGMITIS.**

Found at Gafsa, Source des Trois Palmiers, and near Ghardimaou, though never common anywhere.

**8. CISTICOLA CURSITANS.** (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. vii. p. 259.)

Found near Gabes, and at Source des Trois Palmiers.

**9. PARUS MAJOR.**

Found only in the high oak and cork woods near Ghardimaou, and El Fedja, where it was fairly common.

**10. PARUS LEDOUCI.** (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. viii. p. 44.)

Also found at Ghardimaou and El Fedja, though less abundant than the preceding species, and occurring only in the oak forests, which are at a higher level than the cork woods. The range of the Algerian Cole Tit appears to be confined to the wooded mountains of the North. Certainly I never met with it in the South, or even in Central Tunis, where the sole representative of the Tit family would seem to be *P. ultramarinus*.

**11. CERTHIA FAMILIARIS.**

Fairly common in the woods near Ghardimaou, where it was breeding. A nest with young in it found on 20th May, and young on wing met with in the second week of June.

**12. ANTHUS CERVINUS.**

I have specimens of this Pipit both from Mr. Aplin and M. Blanc. The former found it at the Source des Trois Palmiers, and near Kairouan towards the end of April. M. Blanc obtained his specimens in the far south in the early winter. In habits the Red-throated Pipit seems greatly to resemble the Meadow-Pipit, but its note is altogether different. Both species were seen and heard on the same day.

**13. PYCNONOTUS BARBATUS.** (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. vi. p. 146.)

The Dusky Bulbul was fairly common in the wild-olive woods, and *macchia* of myrtle, cistus, &c., bordering the

streams of the Medjerdah Valley, as also on the slopes of the adjacent hills, but never in high forest. A shy bird, and much oftener heard than seen. Call-note or song rich and clear. The following fairly expresses it:—"tit, wot, wot, tit, tit," uttered sometimes from top of a bush.

The present species apparently does not occur far south of the Tell Mountains, although it extends westward into Algeria and Morocco, where it appears to be much commoner than in Tunis.

14. *LANIUS FALLAX*. (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. viii. p. 247.)

Mr. Aplin brought home with him a specimen of Grey Shrike differing entirely from the ordinary form found in South Tunis, which is *L. dealbatus*, or *L. elegans*, according to Dresser. I was at first inclined to consider this Shrike a hybrid between *L. dealbatus* and *L. algeriensis*, but on further consideration, and on comparing it with the specimens in the British Museum labelled *L. fallax*, I find it agrees so closely with these, being indeed I may say absolutely identical with some of them, that I have decided to refer it to the present form.

Mr. Aplin secured the specimen in question, a female, near Gabes on the 27th January last, and apparently it was the only one of this form that he met with. Had the locality been further north, where *L. dealbatus* and *L. algeriensis* meet, there would have been more reason, perhaps, for supposing it to be a hybrid, and less in favour of its being *L. fallax*.

I believe this is the first recorded instance of *L. fallax* having been found in this part of North Africa, although it occurs both to the east and to the west, viz. in N.E. Africa, Palestine, and further east on the one side, and in the Canary Islands on the other. Such being the case, therefore, the fact of this Shrike occurring in South Tunis is perhaps not to be wondered at, the wonder, if any, being that it should not be of more common occurrence there. It would be interesting to know whether this form be more common further south than Tunis, in Tripoli for instance, which

lies more in the same degree of latitude as the hitherto recognized habitats of *L. fallax*. It is quite possible that the bird found by Mr. Aplin may have strayed northwards, along the sea-coast to Gabes.

While on the subject of Grey Shrikes I may observe that I have among my numerous specimens from South Tunis a few which differ from the ordinary type of *L. dealbatus* in having the grey of the upper parts tinged with an ashy brown shade instead of being of a pure French-grey, the white alar patch also being much smaller, the secondaries having much less white in them, and the darker tail-feathers being brown instead of black. The underparts, however, are pure white, as in the typical bird. These are probably immature birds.

#### 15. *MUSICAPA COLLARIS*.

I have specimens of the White-collared Flycatcher both from Mr. Aplin and from M. Blanc. The former found it at the Source des Trois Palmiers, but nowhere else, and apparently it is not a common species in Tunis. It frequents low bushes near water, and in its habits resembles its congener the Pied Flycatcher.

#### 16. *COTILE RUPESTRIS*. (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. x. p. 109.)

Only met with on one occasion, viz. on the 11th April, in the rocky gorge near the Source des Trois Palmiers, where three or four individuals were flying about, in company with some White-rumped Swifts (*Cypselus affinis*).

#### 17. *COCOTHRAUSTES VULGARIS*.

Mr. Aplin shot a male Hawfinch on the 14th May, in a wild-olive wood in the Medjerdah Valley. Contrary to what one would have expected, this specimen was of a very dull colour, and more like our English bird than the brighter-coloured form found in South Europe.

The Hawfinch is apparently not a common bird in Tunisia, although so plentiful in Sicily and Southern Italy generally.

#### 18. *EMBERIZA CIRLUS*.

Met with only in the Medjerdah Valley, on the shrubbed hillsides, where a pair was secured after considerable trouble.

A few others were seen, but the species does not appear to be so common in Tunisia as it is further west.

#### 19. ALAUDA ARBOREA.

I have specimens of the Wood-Lark both from Mr. Aplin and from M. Blanc. The former found it in the north, in the month of May, when it was evidently breeding. M. Blanc met with it in the early winter in the far south, viz. at Zarzis on the sea-coast. Although the species thus seems to have an extensive range, it is not a common bird in the Regency.

#### 20. RHAMPHOCORYS CLOT-BEY. (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xiii. p. 527)

Mr. Aplin met with this Lark—a true desert species—on two occasions only, viz. at the desert wells of Bir Ghezeu and Bir Abdallah, to the S.E. of the Chott Djerid, securing one specimen at the first-mentioned place. At the latter place he saw three or four others, in company with some Short-toed Larks, but failed to obtain another example. The country in the above districts is either bare, or sparsely dotted with scrub vegetation.

This species seems to have a very restricted range in Tunis, and even where it occurs it is by no means abundant. Further west, in the Algerian Sahara, I believe it is commoner, and near Ain Sefra, in the province of Oran, I understand it is plentiful \*.

#### 21. GARRULUS CERVICALIS. (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. iii. p. 98.)

Found in small numbers in the high oak woods near Ghardimaou. Their cry and habits resemble those of the common Jay.

#### 22. CYPSELUS APUS.

Met with the first on 20th April, on the march to El Djem, and subsequently at Kairouan and at Ghardimaou. The Common Swift is plentiful, and breeds at Tunis and

\* [In February, 1889, the Zoological Society of London received living specimens of this Lark, believed to have been obtained in the same district. See P. Z. S. 1889, p. 26.—EDD.]

other towns in the north of the Regency. I am told, however, that it does not breed in the far south, occurring there only on passage. I may here observe that I cannot hear of any of the Swifts wintering anywhere in the Regency.

23. *CYPSELUS PALLIDUS*. (Dresser, B. of Europe, iv. p. 597.)

Mr. Aplin met with this species also at El Djem on the 20th April, when he secured a specimen, and he fell in with it again a few days later at Kairouan, but no further inland. At El Djem it was fairly plentiful, hawking for insects over the old Roman Amphitheatre, and at Kairouan it simply swarmed, being the common Swift of the place, and far outnumbering *C. apus*, which was also present, as were also one or two White-rumped Swifts, all circling round and about the Great Mosque of Sidi-Okba. *C. pallidus* and *C. apus* no doubt breed at both these places. Mr. Aplin apparently had no difficulty in distinguishing one species from the other, when on the wing in company. The note or cry of *C. pallidus* also seemed to him different from that of *C. apus*.

I notice that Dr. Koenig found the present species in Algeria, at Bordj Saada near Biskra (J. f. O. 1895, p. 184).

24. *DENDROCOPIUS NUMIDICUS*. (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xviii. p. 217.)

Not at all uncommon in the high oak forests of Ghardimaou, at El Fedja, and in habits and alarm-note resembling *D. major*. Mr. Aplin thought he also once heard *D. minor* in these woods, but was not quite certain about it.

25. *GECINUS VAILLANTII*. (Cat. B. Brit. Mus. xviii. p. 41.)

Found in the same forests, but less numerous than the preceding species, and extremely shy and difficult to approach. The ringing-note of this bird resembles that of our species, and is not so deep in tone as that of *G. canus*.

26. *ALCEDO ISPIDA*.

Specimens were obtained both by Mr. Aplin and M. Blanc. The Kingfisher occurs both in the north and in the south of

the Regency, but is less common in the latter districts, owing to the want of water.

**27. CIRCUS ÆRUGINOSUS.**

I obtained a specimen of this Harrier last year, but omitted to include it in my list.

**28. PERNIS APIVORUS.**

M. Blanc sent me a specimen of the Honey Buzzard, which occurs as a regular migrant in Tunis.

**29. RALLUS AQUATICUS.**

Only one specimen, obtained at the Source des Trois Palmiers.

**30. PORZANA PARVA.**

Also only one specimen, obtained at Gafsa.

**31. CURSORIUS GALLICUS.**

Met with on several occasions, notably at Bir Sultane and to the S.E. of the Chott Djerid, and again later on further north, on the road to Sfax. The birds were sometimes in pairs, at others in small flocks of six or seven individuals, and always on bare sand hillocks or semi-desert country. Their running powers are wonderful. On the wing their short tails and broad wings, with black underneath, give them a curious appearance. They sail a good deal on still wings, and sometimes twist about like a Lapwing. The note, uttered on the ground, is a short sharp "weet," also "weet-quoi."

**32. SQUATAROLA HELVETICA.**

A specimen of the Grey Plover was received from M. Blanc.

**33. TRINGA MINUTA.**

Specimens obtained near Ghardimaou.

**34. CALIDRIS ARENARIA.**

A specimen received from M. Blanc.

**35. STERNA FLUVIATILIS.**

Specimens from M. Blanc, both in adult and immature plumage.

36. *Sterna dougalli* [?] \*.

Specimens from M. Blanc, among them a beautiful adult male, perfectly white, with the exception of the black head and faint roseate tinge on the underparts. Both the Roseate and the Common Tern are plentiful in summer in the south of the Regency, and particularly on the island of Djerba, which is a favourite breeding-haunt of the Terns.

37. *Hydrochelidon nigra*.

Obtained last year, but omitted in my list.

VIII.—*Note on Anas erythrophthalma, Wied.*

By T. SALVADORI, C.M.Z.S.

ONE of the most obscure species among the Ducks is *Anas erythrophthalma*, Wied (Beitr. iv. p. 929), described from Villa de Belmonte, in Southern Brazil.

Of the two birds collected by Wied, the female was in good condition, but the male had the wings imperfect, having lost the quills. These two specimens, like the rest of Prince Max of Wied's collection, are now in the American Museum of Natural History in New York. They were examined many years ago by Mr. Salvin, who thought that perhaps they were to be referred to *Metopiana peposaca* (Ibis, 1874, p. 319). The same opinion was expressed two years later by Selater and Salvin in their excellent "Revision of the Neotropical Anatidæ" (P. Z. S. 1876, p. 399, note). But more recently, in 1889, Mr. Allen, in a paper on Wied's types (Bull. Am. Mus. N. H. ii. p. 269), has quite emphatically expressed the opinion that *A. erythrophthalma* is a very different bird from *Metopiana peposaca*.

This was the state of things when I undertook the preparation of the Catalogue of the Ducks in the British Museum. Naturally I made a point to settle the question.

Very soon I found that Dr. Hartlaub in 1814 (Verz. Ges. Mus. p. 119) had mentioned a specimen in the Bremen

\* [We leave this as written, but Mr. Aplin, to whom Saunders has written on the subject, states that the only grey Tern he observed was *Sterna anglica*.—EDD.]